



## Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs

Tony Evers, Governor | Mary M. Kolar, Secretary

August 6, 2020

Dear Union Grove Community:

As you are hopefully now aware, there are Members and staff at our Home who have COVID-19. This is a challenging and stressful time for all of us. I want you to know that we value each and every person who lives here and our staff are absolutely dedicated to taking care of them. One of the best things about working at our Union Grove Home is the strong relationships we have all developed with Members, the community atmosphere, and the sense of pride we have for taking care of our nation's heroes. We have amazing staff and I have witnessed them rising to many challenges, just as they will rise to this one.

On Tuesday, we reported the first two residents to test positive for coronavirus and let you know we would immediately initiate a round of testing of all Members and staff. Test results continue to come in, but it is with a heavy heart that I am letting you know that **today we have a total of 12 Members and 11 staff with coronavirus**. Each of the 12 Members are in the same living unit. Four of those Members are exhibiting symptoms of the virus. All Members who have tested positive have been notified and we have called each of their primary contacts.

Our strong infection control procedures and protocols kept our Members free of the coronavirus for five months. Now, we are refocusing all efforts on preventing its spread. At this time, only staff will be allowed on campus. We will have a security checkpoint where supplies and other items can be dropped, but please keep in mind that retrieving these items requires extra staff time so exercise this option judiciously.

With regard to staff, we have initiated requests and will be initiating more for additional staffing. We have already made a request for additional agency staff and we are also working with the federal VA to bring in additional care staff. We are making a request for support from the National Guard to help us with testing so we can free up our staff who would have otherwise been performing this task.

We've also heard some express concern about personal protective equipment (PPE). We do have PPE supplies and access to more if needed. Staff serving the infected Members are wearing the appropriate PPE including N95 masks and face shields. We are also providing all other staff PPE. We continue to follow the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control.

We expect to have all the results of all the tests that we initiated this week by Monday. The lab is aware of the urgency of our test results and will do their best to get results out quickly. We check for those results every day. All positive cases will get a call directly from us. We will be retesting all Members and staff in 14 days to establish a new baseline of where the virus is within the campus.

As a reminder, the following steps are being taken on campus, due to the Members' positive test results:

- The Members reside in private rooms and will be quarantined there.
- A very limited number of staff will work with the Members. These staff have been trained in infectious disease control and will be wearing the appropriate PPE including N95 masks and face shields.
- Care will be coordinated with the Members' primary care physician.

- Staff will follow the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and the Department of Health Services regarding contact tracing, additional testing, and quarantining others, as necessary.

The WDVA's goal is to be as transparent as possible. We are doing our best to provide everyone information as quickly as possible. Be assured, we always call a Member's primary contact when we need to provide time sensitive information or consult regarding COVID-19 pertaining to that Member. We post all updates/notifications such as these on our website – [www.WisVetsHomesCOVID.com](http://www.WisVetsHomesCOVID.com).

Finally, as always and perhaps more important than ever, for those who have served our country and those who support them, stay home whenever you can, wear a mask when you are out, and try to stay at least six feet away from other people. We are in this for the duration and your actions will help us win the battle against the virus.

Stay safe and healthy.

If you have any questions, I am happy to address them.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Diane Lynch".

Diane Lynch, Homes Division Administrator